

REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to the Office Action dated December 24, 2002. Applicants have amended claims 1, 5, 16, and 17, and have added new claims 24 and 25. Claims 1-14, 16-20, and 24-25 are pending.

As a preliminary matter, the Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a), and indicated that the circuitry for converting signals received from the contact area must be shown or the features canceled from the claims. Applicants submits a proposed replacement drawing of Figure 1 attached herewith that illustrates the circuitry, as described in the specification on page 4, lines 16-19.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended claim 5 for purposes of clarity, and requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-2, 10 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Seeley et al. (U.S. 6,132,223). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection to the extent such rejection may be considered applicable to the amended claims. Seeley fails to disclose each and every feature of Applicants' amended claims, as required by 35 U.S.C. 102 (b), and provides no teaching that would have suggested the desirability of modification to include such features.

As one example, Seeley fails to describe a housing that defines a slot having a central region of at least a height and a width to receive a memory card of a first type, and outer regions of a second height that extend the central region to a width to receive a memory card of a second type different from the first type, as required by claim 1. Moreover, Seeley fails to teach or suggest a first electrically conductive contact area disposed within the slot to contact the memory card of the first type, and a second electrically conductive contact area disposed within the slot to contact the memory card of the second type, as further required by claim 1.

To the contrary, Seeley entirely fails to teach or suggest an apparatus having a slot structured to receive different types of removable memory cards. In fact, none of the references cited by the Examiner teach or suggest these requirements of Applicants' claims.

In relying on Seeley, the Examiner refers to FIG. 3, which shows a slot having an upper portion and a downward extension.¹ However, Seeley describes that the upper portion of the slot is "occupied by the upper part of [an] IC stick," and that the downward extension is "used to pass a memory chip on the IC stick."² Thus, Seeley clearly fails to teach a slot having a central region to receive a memory card of a first type, and outer regions that extend the central region to a width to receive a memory card of a second type different from the first type, as required by amended claim 1.

Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion that this downward extension has at least a height and a width to receive a memory card, as required by Applicants' amended claim 1. In fact, the teaching of Seeley directly conflicts with these features of Applicants' claim 1. Contrary to Applicants' claim 1, Seeley teaches that both the upper region and the downward extension are necessary to receive the IC stick.

Furthermore, Seeley fails to teach or describe an electrically conductive first contact area disposed within the slot to contact the memory card of the first type, and an electrically conductive second contact area disposed within the slot to contact the memory card of the second type, as required by Applicants' amended claim 1. In regard to Applicants' originally filed claim 1, the Examiner referred to connector 54 and contact pads 60. In direct contrast with the requirements of amended claim 1, Seeley describes connector 54 as having "two rows of pad-engaging contacts 56 which are designed to engage contacts pads 60 on the lower face of the IC stick."³ From this description, it is clear that these elements are positioned to contact the same IC stick, and not different types of removable memory media, as required by Applicants' claims.

For at least these reasons, the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case for anticipation of Applicant's claims 1-2, 10 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b). Withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

¹ Column 2, line 54.

² Column 2, line 55 – column, line 5.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 3-9, 11, 13-14, and 16-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Seeley et al. in various combinations with Schmidt et al. (U.S. 5,901,049), Saito et al. (U.S. 6,402,529), and Itou et al. (U.S. 6,010,066). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection to the extent such rejections may be considered applicable to the claims as amended.

As described above, Seeley entirely fails to teach or suggest an apparatus capable of receiving different types of removable memory cards. More specifically, Seeley fails to teach or suggest a housing that defines a slot having a central region of a height and a width to receive a memory card selected from a set comprising at least three different types of memory cards of at least two different widths, as required by claim 16.

As described above, Seeley describes an adapter having a slot for receiving an IC stick. The slot has an upper portion that receives the IC stick, and a downward extension that provides space for a memory chip on the IC stick to pass into the adapter."⁴ Contrary to Applicants claim 1, Seeley teaches that both the upper region and the downward extension are necessary to receive the IC stick. None of the references cited by the Examiner teach or suggest modification of the Seeley adapter to address this deficiency. In fact, none of the references cited by the Examiner even suggest an adapter capable of receiving different types of removable media.

Furthermore, Seeley fails to teach or describe a plurality of electrically conductive contact areas positioned within the housing to provide electrical contact with the different types of memory cards, as required by Applicants' amended claim 16. As discussed above, Seeley describes a connector 54 as having two rows of pad-engaging contacts 56 which are designed to engage contacts pads 60 on the same IC stick, and not different types of removable memory media, as required by amended claim 16. None of the other references even teach or suggest an apparatus having a slot capable of receiving different types of removable memory cards, let alone one in which a plurality of electrically conductive contact areas are arranged to provide electrical contact with different types memory cards.

³ Column 2, ll. 33-37.

⁴ Column 2, line 55 – column, line 5.


For at least these reasons, the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case for non-patentability of Applicants' claims 3-9, 11, 13-14, and 16-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

New Claims

Applicant has added claims 24 and 25 to the pending application. The applied references fail to disclose or suggest the inventions defined by Applicants' new claims, and provide no teaching that would have suggested the desirability of modification to arrive at the claimed inventions. As one example, the references fail to disclose or suggest an adapter having a housing that defines a slot to receive one of a first type of memory card and a second type of memory card having different lengths. Moreover, the references fail to disclose or suggest a first contact area disposed within a front portion of the slot to provide electrical contact for the first type of memory card, and a second contact area disposed within a rear portion of the slot to provide electrical contact for the second type of memory card. No new matter has been added by the new claims.

All claims in this application are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims. Please charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 09-0069. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney to discuss any questions that may remain with respect to the current application.

Date: 3/14/3


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